

A Thought for the Day

Necessarily a Thought for Life

Instalment One

Miniature lessons in learning the Dhamma
and learning to live as a Buddhist

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Table of contents

Instalment One

Preface	2
Introduction	3
1. One's Religion is One's own Cultural Heritage To be Lived and Practiced	6
2. Be mindful of the Friends You Keep Peer Pressure Contaminates	9
3. Respect - a vital Social Lubricant It enhances the Smoothness of Human Life	11
4. Education and Cultural Growth of our Children in Sri Lanka	13
5. Training and Growing up in one's own Religious Culture	17
6. The search for Success via Auspicious Moments?	19
7. Self - Examination and Self – Correction of Man by Man	21
8. Think and live the Buddhist way	23
9. Contentment or <i>santutthi</i> in Buddhism is not Gluttonous Enjoyment	26

’ ’ ’	2
10. Towards a Brotherhood of Mankind Let All Religions Unite	28
11. A Firm Resolve for Self Improvement	30
12. Self-Composure and Calmness of manner	33
13. Goodness of Man within the Dhamma Perimeter	35
14. How we Pay for the Evil we do	37
15. In Harmony with One Another Man and Nature	40

Instalment Two

Preface	42
1. Forbearance and Patience	44
2. Self-Standard Religious Thinking	46
3. Independence, Inter-dependence and Social growth	48
4. Thine own Path to Success in Life - Maṅgalaṃ	49
5. On thine own Path to Success in Life - Maṅgalaṃ 1	51
6. On thine own Path to Success in Life - Maṅgalaṃ 2	53
7. On thine own Path to Success in Life - Maṅgalaṃ 3	55
8. Thoughts for the Day - Poson Full Moon 2002	57

Instalment Three

1. New Year Greetings 2008	59
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Preface

From a ceaselessly flowing stream of clear dhamma thinking, I wish to offer you a few mouthfuls of refreshing pure water. The comforting moisture of

religiousness or spirituality in us is today rapidly and continuously evaporating and we are hardly aware of the consequent dehydration to which we are subject all the time. The world now is passing through a devastating process of desertification, aided by violent winds of consumerism, moving hand in hand with a gluttonous sense of gratification. It is a delight to see even a distant ray of hope, a hope for survival, in a wave of revivalist new thinking which now in the western world speaks of 'delay gratification'.

Deserts are no more confined to Sahara in Africa or Gobi and Taklamakan in Asia. The unbridled greed of the human, in his insatiable thirst for pleasure, power and position is making every continent a virtual desert. This is the outcome of the colossal ignorance of man, caught up in a blinding storm of greed, hatred and rivalry. Apparently the heavens above and the divine therein, choose not to interfere. Unlike in the glacial age, this is a process set in motion by man, not excluding the woman of course. This is time for action by somebody.

These attempts in a search for an analysis and an answer are now in your hands.

My grateful thanks to my Elder Brother Bhikkhu Mettavihari for the unstinted support received from him in the final preparation of this MSS for the press.

Dhammavihari

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Introduction

Included within these pages are very brief sermons delivered by me over the SLBC under the official designation Thought for the Day during the last three years. They are now updated and enlarged. Thoughts are virtually the brick and cement out of which the edifice of life of man is built. The body and the mind, i.e.

kāya and *citta* or *mana*, work together at this task. It is the mind or better say the activity of the mind of man, i.e. his ability think that gets him clearly into a far superior grade above the animals = *Manassa ussannatāya manussā* [VvA. 18 & KhpA 123].

It is for this reason that Buddhism pays special attention to this area of thought activity of the mind. One needs no more sermons on this subject than study verses 1 & 2 of the Dhammapada. Appreciating this vital need for the Buddhists to take perfect control over their mind-activity, we endeavour in these brief essays to guide our readers in what are believed to be the wholesome or *pasanna* and non-corrosive or *a + paduṭṭha* channels for their mind-activity. The joint-activity of body and mind referred to above has always to be for the weal and welfare of those with whom we live, man and bird and beast. All our thinking has to be directed in this direction.

If the day of a human, man or woman, begins with a well formulated thought, we can assume that he or she is well set on the launch-pad for a successful take off in life. One must be unwaveringly decided as to the destination which one wishes to reach finally, both here and hereafter. In other words, humans need, with a reasonable degree of good judgement, to be goal-oriented and not be mere jetsam and flotsam in a running stream, moving aimlessly. At the very outset, we would like to remind ourselves that no Buddhist, nor any man with sanity at that, subscribes to the thinking 'Eat, drink and be merry. For tomorrow we die.'

There is enough evidence now in the world of scientific thinking to accept and establish that the genesis of the human does not begin in the womb of his mother and that what we refer to as life does not end with his physical death here as a human. We speak today in scientific parlance 'of the mind of the unborn child in the mother's womb as being pre-monitored'. Or that the new scientific process of cloning cannot generate yet another Mozart, the musician.

This being the moderate attitude today to human life in the world, many are turning in the direction of self-responsibility for what the humans do, and certainly not to the will of others, here or elsewhere, even when it turns out in grand global style for self-appointed world powers to sweep clean evil in the world. This does not require much comment to indicate that this evil in the world is what the humans themselves secretly generate in their own premises, whether it be the dirty bomb or the suit-case bomb at global level.

These brief notes entitled thoughts for the day which we present to you herein are planned with a view to stimulate the thinking of the saner citizens at world level, Buddhist or non-Buddhist, both men and women, who we believe are, at the moment, in their not-so-young and not-so-rebellious days. Their leadership role in the human community has to be set at a much higher premium. They must necessarily be the wheels within wheels in a skillfully calibrated system of human thinking. This is why we in Buddhism call parents the real guides who indicate to their children what the world is: *imassa lokassa dassetāro*, and are also for that self same reason, the first teachers of the human progeny: *pubbācariyā'ti vuccare*.

Humans have to be taught, from their childhood days in the home, their rightful place in life, not only alongside other humans, but rightfully within the entire ecosystem, so that nothing within it gets destroyed in the hands of the humans. Scientists of the world have revealed the inestimable damage man has done to nature, near and far, over the recent decades. Listen to it yourself.

'The one process now going on that will take millions of years to correct is the loss of genetic and species diversity by the destruction of natural habitats. This is the folly our descendants are least likely to forgive us'. p. 4

- The Biophilia Hypothesis edited by Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson. 1993

Buddhism traces back the cause of this to ignorance, a massive cloud of

ignorance which inheres in man, which generates a devastating sense of arrogance which pushes man to claim superiority over man, in terms of colour and ethnicity, political differences like democracy and communism and conflicting religious beliefs which are mischievously made to sprout like wild weeds by interested parties, world over.

Let each one today, with a dignified sense of detachment, pack away in the deep freeze these alarming divisive factors, and keeping behind bars the agents of these, the evil geniuses, work for a harmonious unity of mankind.

What we endeavor in these essays is to bring to light unquestionable fundamental truths about man and his basic nature, and indicate the possibility of correcting them for the good of the world we live in, without any assistance from unknown worlds outside. Let mankind know its membership, its strength and weaknesses and work for a goal of multi-faceted liberation, social, economic and religious, without any assistance through remote control, terrestrial or celestial.



Thought for the Day 1

One's Religion is One's own Cultural Heritage To be Lived and Practiced

Greetings to our listeners. Listen to me. I quote. "Having perfected these items of good behaviour and good living in this manner, you shall always succeed in life. You shall never fail. You shall always reach a blissful state." Unquote.

The Buddha, your Master as well as mine, said so unmistakably in the Mangala Sutta when he said *Etādisāni katvāna sabbattha m'aparājitā sabbattha sotthim gacchanti taṃ tesam maṅgalaṃ uttamaṃ* [Sn. v.269].

I ask you. Now tell me the truth. Isn't this a fact that the lady of the house is probably regular in playing the Pirit cassette every morning in the home while she is making the breakfast. There is no denying that there is a great deal of faith and piety in doing so. She is keen on having the household blessed thereby. OK. We know she has been repeatedly advised to do so.

A new brand of 'Caring for the Flock' via *shanti karma*, undertaken by Buddhist clergy of all grades, junior and senior, invoking *ānubhāva* of the Buddha's virtues from *arahaṃ* onwards has now come on the scene. But the Buddha, as he departed from our midst at the age of eighty, passing away totally in his *parinibbāna* [not going thereby over to a super state], left us in the care of the Dhamma, warning us not to seek another: 'Be ye under the care of the dhamma and none other': *dhamma-saraṇā anañña-saraṇā* [DN.II.100].

Let us be honest and frank. What does the lady of the house expect as a blessing? The Buddha is not going to issue her, or any one of you at that, a certificate to say that the house has been cleaned, disinfected and cleared of disease germs. Or that the profits in your or your husband's business concern are going to increase because of that chanting. Nor are you going to have good-will agents coming to you, bringing prosperity to your home.

If a Pirit cassette is played in the home, with all due propriety, at the right time and with the right atmosphere of peace and quiet, and readiness of everyone to listen, why don't the householders, the mother and the father and the children, find the time to sit and listen to it, with an intent to understand its message of meaningful instructions? If you are determined to accept that message and live up to it.

Why don't we do it during the first half hour before dinner, at least once or twice a week. How delightful it should turn out to be, to people with a sincere sense of religious piety and dedication? Others who do not need it, can completely keep out of it. You and your family are by now old enough to have

learnt the meaning of what is being chanted as *pirit*, if you ever cared for it.

The mother or the father, if they are responsible enough to be parents, should also be responsible for transmitting this message of culture down the family line. Pirit cassettes cannot be expected, I warn you, to play the role of modern gadgets like automatic gears or air bags in modern motor cars, or the no fuss no frost refrigerator of your wife in the home. Or serve every one of you like stand by lights during power-cuts these days. Cassette-makers, of whatever standing they be, no doubt, keep reaping bumper harvests, [mind you, at your expense!] while you keep believing in promised rewards.

The Maṅgala Sutta is one of your regularly chanted *parittas*. With courage, I hold the conviction that the efficacy of *parittas* is more in your living up to the expectations of the injunctions they indicate rather than in your petrified or even your casually passing dreamy listening to their chanting or incantation.

The Maṅgala Sutta highlights thirty-eight items of good domestic living patterns and requires you and your children to live up to these. Do you ever check on this? You and your wife do regularly check your bank returns almost on arrival in the home. The family has to be definitely co-operative and be integrated in building up such an hierarchy of above indicated values. That is why the sutta winds up saying *etādisāni katvāna* which means having perfected or having lived up to these items of good behaviour.

If you go to a cafe or a restaurant in the city at meal time, would you and your family members just sit at a table and keep grinning and smiling at the menu card? No. Not indeed. You would select the items you like in the menu, order them and on delivery, taste them, eat them and relish them. Let us, in our own way, handle the *parittas* for this same purpose. It is for building up your strength, your moral and inner spiritual strength which will serve you both here and now, in terms of this life as well as in a life beyond.

Of this, i.e. of a life beyond death, we also know that it does really exist. Not

every one of us is going to be safely delivered somewhere after death, on account of the grand *paṃsukūlas* that are being conducted on behalf of the dead. You have a long journey to go and you need security all along against untoward disasters. Show proof that you seriously wish to terminate this perilous journeying. Do not entertain even the slightest doubt about this. It totally destroys your being a Buddhist.



Thought for the Day 2

Be mindful of the Friends You Keep Peer Pressure Contaminates

Dear listeners. Call Buddhism a religion, a philosophy or whatever you like. Please do note that Buddhism has a very rich philosophy of life, a philosophy for living, without having to lean on any divinity on this side or that. It is a philosophy which serves mankind, anywhere and everywhere.

We start today with a few ideas from the Maṅgala Sutta to which we referred on the last occasion. With or without school-going children in the home, most of us are familiar with the concept of peer pressure. It refers generally to young persons of the same age group, influencing the others, invariably in a direction which is not very wholesome. This, however, is said mostly of children at school level. The Maṅgala Sutta of old anticipates this, in a somewhat more comprehensive context, when it declares as its first key item to personal success or *maṅgalaṃ*, the selection of desirable associates and keeping away from the contaminating bad ones. It runs as *Asevanā ca bālānaṃ paṇḍitānañ ca sevanā*.

This Maṅgala Sutta is said to be delivered by the Buddha, in response to a request made by an extra-terrestrial being [beings whose existence is no more challenged by the scientists today] on behalf of both the humans and the

heavenly hosts [*bahū devā manussā ca*] who wished to know as to what bring success in life [*maṅgalāni acintayum*].

This discreet choice of associates does not imply anything like class or creed discrimination. Far from it. Make no mistake about it. Let not any body misinterpret this to you. But it does, on the other hand, recognise the possibility of humans, whether they be men, women or children, no matter of what age or which camp they come from, by their own vicious and wicked nature, contaminating and poisoning the minds of others and leading them in their downgrade descent. The Buddhist admonition is to avoid the company of such evil-minded persons for fear of oneself being contaminated through association: *upalepa-bhayā dhīro neva pāpa-sakhā siyā*.

For effective application of this injunction, each one of us must ourselves possess acceptable norms or standards of judgement. This is where one has to use with discrimination one's religious or socially accepted and recognised values. Parents have to guide their children in the homes on those lines. The schools have to augment and supplement them. The religion must finally sit in judgement on them. But nominal religious studies propagated today through Sunday dhamma school curricula, covering a diverse range of useful and less useful subjects, cannot adequately meet this requirement. It has to be a closely integrated system of value inculcation. It is these values of good and bad which have to be adhered to in deciding as to whom one should associate and whom one should keep away from. There is nothing anti-social in the concept of *asevanā ca bālānaṃ*. It is no more and no less than keeping away from infective disease germs.

Let us now take the next success-generator concept of *paṇḍitānañ ca sevanā*. It implies the seeking and acquisition of the company of beneficent resource personnel. Persons, being in whose company one acquires wisdom and judgement and good ways of life, i.e. persons who set the model for good human behaviour. *Paṇḍita* does not necessarily connote people with massive book

learning or mere academic proficiency. Much learning, without incorporating it in one's life, is generally frowned upon in Buddhism. The simile of the cowherd who only counts the heads of cattle every evening before handing them over to the owner, without ever owning even a single one - *gopo' va gāvo ganayaṃ paresaṃ* at verse no. 19 of the Dhammapada is really very pungent on this. Why don't we communicate some of these brilliant sayings which come in our Dhamma to our children and our children's children? If we do not, we are unavoidably failing in our duty of being advisers or *ovādakas*.

You parents, young or old, both mother and father, who come with the easy excuse that you have hardly any time, with so much office work to make a living, to spare for your children, you shall never have in your life time a moment to rest your head in peace. I warn you. Both you and your children will precipitously fall into seriously tragic situations, some time, some where. I have seen this happen, day after day. They come to us only when they are terminally ill. With a possible saner government of the country, we shall soon need courts of law to prosecute parents, as some other sensible countries in the world do, for contributing to the increase of juvenile delinquency in the land like the growth of wild weeds. Gentlemen of the jury. Please take note of this.



Thought for the Day 3

Respect - a vital Social Lubricant

It enhances the Smoothness of Human Life

Respect is an inalienable virtue in human society = *pūjā ca pūjanīyānaṃ etaṃ maṅgalaṃ uttamaṃ*. These words of the Buddha in the Maṅgala Sutta uphold this virtue. They mean showing due respect to those who deserve it. It is implied once again in another word *gāraṇa* which comes from the same source.

This virtue operates in society where humans recognize seniority in age or greater merit in persons like one's parents or teachers or even elders in the family groups or society at large. In our Buddhist thinking, such persons who are in our midst in the human community deserve to be dutifully honoured and respectfully attended on. The Pali language uses several appropriate words such as *vandati*, *namassati*, *abhivadati* to indicate this attitude of respect of humans towards humans, each according to what they deserve from the other.

The Anguttara Nikaya, for example, puts this behaviour of children towards their parents as *Tasmā hi te namasseyya sakkareyyā 'tha paṇḍito* = Therefore a wise person should show respect to his parents and attend on them well [AN. I. 132]. Parents come to deserve this position on account of the role they play in being the progenitors [*āpādakā*] of their offspring. We watch with caution and considerable dismay the possible corrosion that could come upon mankind with the large scale unguarded introduction into the human community of test-tube babies and today's speculated techniques of farm-yard-like cloning.

Further, it is the parents who introduce their young progeny to the world, indicating the relative values within which the younger are to grow, fitting themselves harmoniously to the adult-world in which they must eventually take their rightful place [*imassa lokassa dassetāro*]. We witness, day after day, the failure of this duty by parents with the arrival into our midst of teenage boys and girls, or even older ones well above thirty, who distrust their relationships with older ones in society, including their own parents. They are quite often psychopathic or very near being so. Isn't this calamitously tragic? On account of the wise and responsible role they are called upon to play, the parents are referred to as the first teachers in the human community [*pubbācariyā*].

To the Buddhist, this show of respect, the veneration of humans by humans, on account of each one's relative worth, implies no diminishing of personal prestige or esteem. Nor does it indicate any personality impoverishment. On the other hand, Buddhists are never made to kneel down before believed-in divine

beings of any sort, in veneration or fear. Nor in search of heaven-granted favours. For the Buddhists, only the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha who are of down-to-earth visible origin, and who on their own individual enrichment of life transcend the world, stand above them as objects of veneration.

New trends in philosophy and psychology now developing in the western world are sponsoring respect as a primary human virtue in which growing up young humans, of any brand any where, must be rooted as they commence their growth into worthy manhood and womanhood. Few in this part of the self-flattering world of ours know about these new courageous changes with regard to value orientation.

Three new R's, replacing the old ones of Reading, Writing and Arithmetic in the ancient school curriculum are now triumphantly emerging in the western world. They are Respect, Responsibility and Readiness to learn. These values like respect and responsibility which have been a part of our cultural heritage have to be retrieved and re-established in Sri Lanka, for the un-discriminated good of mankind as a whole.

We believe that an appreciably excellent governance of a state must essentially begin by re-educating its youth, first in their own cultural values, and that in their own homes, leaving no room for large scale unethical conversions which are globally plaguing the world today. It is your turn now, O parents. Please come forward. Leave alone the State and those who run it. They are busy otherwise. Keep an eye on them.



Thought for the Day 4

Education and Cultural Growth

of our Children in Sri Lanka

Bāhusaccañ ca sippañ ca of the Maṅgala Sutta [Sn. v. 261] which means 'wisdom and skills' is possibly the broadest definition of education one could get any where, any time. Wisdom acquired through 'much hearing' is what *bāhusacca* stands for. Within its territory, it is capable of educating both the head and the heart. What men thought seriously in their heads, they expressed to others in words. The heard word or *śrutī* [*sutaṃ* in Pali] thus turned out to be the nursery where wisdom grew. The dignity and the worth of persons who transmitted this learning mattered a great deal in the composition of wisdom. Associated with this noble human quality was *sussūsā* or the willingness to listen to. In other words, it is today's much esteemed virtue of readiness to learn, popularized in the west as one of the modernized 3 R's of old.

Sippaṃ, on the other hand, means the skills one acquires. In his day to day life, man needs a wide range of such skills. But today's technological development has enabled man to transfer most of these into the hands of machines. Robots can now be employed by man as headless slaves to do for him many unseemly jobs as well, which by all decent standards of judgement are not very flattering to the very name human.

Immediately tagged on to this concept of acquired skills is the culture of personal discipline brought under the two items of *vinayo ca susikkhito* and *subhāsītā ca yā vācā*. The first covers perfectly well regulated personal discipline of individuals, of the way they behave, of boys and girls of school going age, international or otherwise. Also of men and women of all ages, employed or house-keeping. They all need a regulated pattern of disciplined behaviour which is covered under *vinayo ca susikkhito*. They also need restraint in their speech, in what they say and how they say, i.e. well uttered words, covered under the concept of *subhāsītā ca yā vācā*.

This item of discipline in one's speech comes to us again as *suvaco* in the

Metta Sutta of the Suttanipata [Sn.v. 143]. But to most people in Sri Lanka, the local scholastic tradition has unfortunately robbed it of its socio-ethical vitality and vibrancy of being 'pleasantness and acceptability of speech in a person' [= *sukhaṃ vāco asmiṃ'ti suvāco*. This is the very sound Commentarial explanation of the word at KhpA. 236]. The new Sinhala rendering *kīkaru* in the hands of pedagogues means 'obedient or submissive'. Its implication of imposing authority on a younger or junior person, we suspect would not very naturally be a wholesome concept. It is bound to provoke challenge.

We need very badly today to restore into our midst everywhere restraint and discipline in every segment of human activity. We suffer today a shameless nakedness in their absence. At times, we are well below the level of animals. Elders, you please need to come forward and show your children the way, in your own personal behaviour in public and private.

The above quote from the Mangala Sutta [Sn. v. 261] insists, unwittingly though, man's need for a balanced education in life where skills are not to be left in the hands of humans without a capacity to judge. Do any homes today in Sri Lanka or the flourishing and the less flourishing schools which are seen mushrooming up everywhere provide this? The answer invariably has to be 'far from it.' This capacity of the human to judge has to be non-fragmented wisdom, of man and for man, which has to be globally valid, humane and magnanimous. Such wisdom cannot have its genesis under partisan loyalties or humiliating submission to segmented areas of immense power in any part of the world, east or west. In such neutrality of judgement alone shall lie the salvation of man.

Buddhism wisely stigmatizes such evilly-inclined knowledge and fore-warns us that such knowledge stands for the ruination of the unwise man who possesses it.

*Yāvad' eva anathāya ñattaṃ bālassa jayate
hanti bālassa sukkaṃsaṃ muddhaṃ assa nipātayaṃ.*

Think of the laboratory-acquired knowledge which created the bomb which brought unimaginable, and we would sternly say unwanted, death and disaster to the Japanese in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This was somebody's judgement against somebody ! We invite you who are parents, and who we believe have a serious concern for the welfare of your children, to come forward. Beware of what new thinking our educational set-ups pipe in today as items of knowledge, unmindful of the consequences they bring in their wake.

What is delivered today to most school going children under the name of job-oriented education is no more than imparting technical skills to do a specific piece of work, either in an office as accountants or any other, doing the so-called white collar jobs or work in factories in the production of articles of day to day need, to serve the requirements of man and animal, as it were.

Even young boys of twelve years often tell us, and mind you they come from Colombo's leading schools, that this is the education they need to earn quick money. Mums and dads, we know for certain, with no better outlook themselves, nurture this thinking. This is not very different from feeding animals in a farm. It makes the recipients aggressively competitive.

In a situation like the present, one last word to the parents and the religious clergy of this country. It is for you to retrieve the devastated and lost foundations of education in this country. One's own religion and one's own home must provide this. Come forward, I pray. Let education be correctly delivered. Gates of Hell are already open. Beware.



Thought for the Day 5

Training and Growing up in one's own Religious Culture

Buddhists of any creed, anywhere in the world, if they claim a unity and identity with the original teachings of the historical Buddha Śākya-muni Gotama, must necessarily imbibe the culture of his early original teachings. It is a culture which imparts a vigorous and wholesome program of growth and development to the human anywhere on this planet, without it being delivered in its origin to any set of selected or chosen people. Hence its universality of appeal and acceptability, without any discrimination in terms of ethnicity or regional identity. It was delivered here, down on earth, by an enlightened human for the guidance and deliverance of less enlightened humans, without any promise of grace, any command to obey and without any threats of punishment for disobedience.

In the absence of any foreign aid or assistance for the salvation of man, from any saviour among men or from any region beyond the realm of man, serving like a discriminating World Bank, the Buddha insisted that salvation of man was in his own hands. It is personal self-development by each individual, by himself or herself, that ferries humans across to their individual liberation in Nirvana, without any implications of time or place.

This immediately implies the grooming of man, i.e. our men and women on earth, for the task. Humans are reckoned as being well above animals on account of their power to judge [*manassa ussannatāya manussā* at VvA. 18 & KhpA. 123] as against animals who act merely on reflexes. This grooming is the most vital component in Buddhism as a religion or a scheme of personal salvation, if you prefer to call it that way. It goes under basic name of culture or *bhāvanā* i.e. culture of the body and culture of the mind and referred to as *kāya-bhāvanā* and *citta-bhāvanā*. If the English word meditation does imply what it is meant to do, it does cover only a very limited narrow segment of the tremendously large concept of *bhāvanā* in Buddhism, which every follower of the

creed needs to realise without wasteful delay.

At the level of physical cultural development of man, i.e. the physical as against the psychic, it is the training for the restrained use of one's external sense organs like the eye and the ear, on receipt of sensory stimuli from the world through them. This in Buddhism is an early preliminary discipline and goes under the name of *indriya-saṃvara* or restraint of sense organs. This goes almost hand in hand with *sīla* or moral culture. This requires the alertness of the physical segment of the human being, including his limbs and his sense organs. An amazingly rich Pali word with forms like *uṭṭhahati* and *uṭṭhāna*, giving the meaning rise up or rise up to, are found to be of recurrent use in our Buddhist texts.

The efficient functioning of this requires immediate and instant response to any call for action. It is the physical readiness to act. It is amazing how this physical readiness to act in the Buddhist process of cultured living requires also an unfailing accompaniment of mental qualities like mindfulness or *sati*, value judgements implied the term *suci-kamma* and deliberation connoted by *nisamma-kārī*. All these have to be primarily founded on dhamma, by being one who lives in accordance with the dhamma or *dhamma-jīvī*. It is this inseparable twin combination of the culture of the body and of the mind which underlies the entire Buddhist process of culture in Buddhism. Note what our texts say:

*Uṭṭhānavato satimatosucikammassa nisamma-kārino
saññatassa ca dhamma-jīvino appamattassa yasobhivaḍḍhati.*

Dhp.v 24

One needs to get the Dhamma into one's very living process. It is the very spirit of life. It is what gives one's word and deed its very distinctive stamp. What one speaks and how one speaks, what one does and how one does, how one acts and how one reacts, they all have to be determined by Dhamma. Every Buddhist, with a head above his shoulders, needs to know that he needs to

acquire a distinct Buddhist way of living, not by accidentally being born into a so-called Buddhist family, but by being guided and directed by parents who begot them and who themselves know what their Buddhistness means.



Thought for the Day 6

The search for Success via Auspicious Moments?

*Nakkhattaṃ paṭimānentaṃ attho bālaṃ upaccagā
attho atthassa nakkhattaṃ kiṃ karissanti tārakā.*

Jataka. I. p. 258

The above quote means: Success bypasses the unwise man who keeps looking out for astrologically auspicious moments. Auspiciousness of a moment lies in the very achievement of success of a venture. Whatever will the stars do: *Kiṃ karissanti tārakā?* It would be well worth reading the illuminating and at the same time hilarious story in the Nakkhatta Jātaka at the reference given above to the Jātaka Collection.

It is good judgement, vigilance, and socially and religiously acceptable ethical goodness which contribute to success.

But we are often told by people in our midst that human nature is far too grounded in superstition and traditional beliefs. Our men and women speak of auspiciousness as coming from three different bases - of what is seen, what is heard and what is contemplated. They go under the following names of *dittha-maṅgala suta-maṅgala* and *muta-maṅgala*. See for your self their very vibrant existence in Sri Lanka today, even in the third millennium.

While stepping out to go on a promising business venture, it is believed to be lucky to meet a girl carrying a vessel of water, possibly with some white flowers put in it. It is good enough for our people even if it is, as is always done, pre-arranged and manipulated. Can we in this country lay a foundation-stone even for the construction of a Buddhist *vihāra* without consultations from several astrologers?

In pursuing this line of action, we believe, a good deal of precious time is wasted, many people including both monks and laymen being put into considerable inconvenience and unjustifiable amounts of money being thrown away for no obvious reason. But these conservative traditions, without any trace of religious or scientific justification, die hard. People both in the village and the town, hold fast on to them, without any rhyme or reason.

Traditionalism in our country is far too deep-seated. It has definitely no respect for our own religious values. On the other hand, it is basically the lack of self confidence and self esteem. It is also the shameless easy way of asking favours from others, no matter who they are, divine or human, native or foreign. Here are the true Buddhist ways of facing life problems and achieving one's life ambitions.

*Uṭṭhānavato satimato sucikammaṣṣa nisammakārino
saññatassa ca dhammajivino appamattassa yaso'bhivaḍḍhati.*

Dhp, v. 24

It means: Physically and mentally alert all the time, ever mindful of what one does, with purity in one's life style and diligent in one's behaviour, full of restraint and living in accordance with the dhamma, such a man will ever grow in fame.

It is of a man who is energetically striving, constantly mindful, is impeccably clean in his dealings, is discreet in whatever he does, who is full restraint, is diligent and is totally religious in his ways that fame and prosperity keeps ever

growing. We have now nearly lived five years of the new millennium. It is time for us to awaken from our slumber and rig ourselves for a new world order. This is how Buddhism has to be protected in the land, by living up to its ideals. Guard against any interference with this style of vibrant and healthy living. This is interference through gross ignorance and consequent superstition, and through vulgarized consumerism, skillfully organized by national and international business establishments. These are the real forces of evil of Mara, armed against us. Get ready, without fear, to fight and over throw them. It has to be a constant battle against our enemies, enemies who challenge us and endeavour to overrun the religious and cultural values which we have cherished over the millennia. It is through real wisdom that one does it: *yodhetha māraṃ paññāyudhena* at Dhammapada v. 40. It means 'Destroy the forces of Evil with the weapons of wisdom'.



Thought for the Day 7

Self - Examination and Self – Correction of Man by Man

In terms of Buddhist thinking, the good life of man goes beyond respecting the so-called human rights of the United Nations. The Buddhist precepts based on *pāṇātipātā* and *adinnādānā* safeguard the human rights of security of life and security of legitimately owned possessions. The world over, civilised society, as against the conquest inclined murderous groups, endeavours to contribute towards these. In countries like Australia, England and America, we have seen people in larger and smaller cities, set up in their areas of residence, new convenient territorial divisions which they name as Neighbourhood Watch Areas. People living down each lane would band themselves together to safeguard the property and the interests of the neighbourhood in which they live. Theirs is a

united conjoint effort, deeply rooted in a remarkable sense of magnanimity and philanthropy.

Buddhism also shows serious concern for the propriety of gender relations of men and women in society, whether married or still unmarried. In Buddhism love, marriage and sex are sacred institutions, sensibly related to and integrated with one another. The third precept of *kāmesu micchācārā*, dealing with sexual impropriety about which Sri Lankan Buddhist monks and laymen are lamentably making stupid blunders today [sometimes even with the connivance of so-called foreign students], substituting sensual for sexual, is firmly saddled in the *pañcasīla* to take adequate care of the female in society. Her rightful place is to be honoured. The discipline and restraint brought about through this precept is associated with a sense of decency, gentlemanliness and social decorum to safeguard our inseparable companion of the gentler sex against sexual assaults like rape, incest, adultery *et cetera* which are calamitously brought about by the male membership of our own society who at times unfortunately turn out to be despicably irresponsible.

Sri Lanka very seriously needs the concept of Neighbourhood Watch Area to protect our women much more than any of our other possessions. It may be that our women too need to be insured against the menacing men in our midst. It is now being widely felt, and more and more, that safeguards have also to be built in the minds of women of Sri Lanka too, both the metropolitan as well as the sub-urban, of females at all ages. Sexual assaults are known to be taking place everywhere around us, very much in work places, both governmental and non-governmental. Enough cases come to be reported to us regularly. Who in this country does ever raise a finger to arrest these degrading offences. Law enforcement in this country seems to be undoubtedly sterilised. Or it is congenitally born impotent.

Think of the escalating rate of abortions in Colombo. It is doubtful whether the thinking of any religious community in this country ever permits or condones

it. But the greed for quick earned money in the minds of a few medical men, with no concern for professional ethics, makes abortion a delightful escape for the unrestrained behaviour of those who seek cheap pleasure via sex. Ministries with high sounding names like Law Reforms, how and where they wish to introduce their reforms has turned out be a pertinent question of the day. Whose cause do those who govern the country mean to serve?

Finally, one more concern about drugs and alcohol in the country. They are indeed excellent money-spinners for somebody, the State or the ingenious business tycoons. Nobody at the higher levels in the state machinery ever seems to realise how much of these ill-gotten money obtained through the sale of alcohol is drained off for the repair of damages caused on account of alcohol, damages through hospitalisation, sex violence and highway accidents and the like. The philanthropy needed for the correction of these evils in the land is all the time pushed off the scene by ambitious political rivalries.

Is the prayer in our country going to be all the time each one for himself and God help us all? In the new year 2006, now nearly round the corner, let us all awaken to the reality of the alarmingly precipitous situation in the land and take adequate corrective measures, with or without the assistance of governments, if we do ever get any sensibly magnanimous ones.



Thought for the Day 8

Think and live the Buddhist way

In developing thoughts of friendliness and loving kindness or *mettā* towards all living things in the world in which we ourselves live, we are well advised in the Buddhist tradition to be guided by the principle of self-example. It is called in our Buddhist texts the *attūpanāyika-dhamma-pariyāya*. It is best that we teach our

young children this principle in the home, from their very young days, almost from their pre-school childhood.

We would like all parents, irrespective of being Buddhist or non-Buddhist, to take this into their heads very seriously. This would form a wonderful safeguard against obnoxious peer pressure from the schools about which you and I are both equally well aware. This self-example principle which we choose to call a very noble socio-religious tradition, comes down from the Lord Buddha, the Master himself and has its roots in the earliest and the best of our Buddhist texts.

See what the Nālaka Sutta of the Suttanipāta tells us on this. `As I am, so are they. As they are, so am I. Taking oneself as the example, let not one kill, nor get others to kill.'

*Yathā ahaṃ tathā ete yathā ete tathā ahaṃ
attānaṃ upamaṃ katvā na haneyya na ghātaye.*

Sn. v. 705

And the Dhammapada presents it from a yet different angle, but with an equally valid and socially vibrant consideration of which the humans of the believed-to-be saner world should take more serious note. Here it is. `All tremble at being beaten with clubs and rods. All dread at being killed. Taking oneself as the example, let not one kill, nor get others to kill.'

*Sabbe tasanti daṇḍassa sabbe bhāyanti maccuno
attānaṃ upamaṃ katvā na haneyya na ghātaye.*

Dhp. v. 129

Please note that the word *daṇḍa* in this context is not punishment. It means sticks and clubs with which people attack one another.

In a very popular Buddhist Sutta called the VeĀudvāreyyaka in the Samyutta Nikāya [SN. V. 352-6], the Buddha tells the people of VeĀudvāra that the best

mode of practicing healthy and sound moral living is on the basis of self-example or *attūpanāyika*.

The Buddha elaborates it in this manner. A Buddhist disciple [i.e. *ariyasāvako*] thinks thus: I wish to live. I do not wish to die. I like happiness and comfort. I am averse to unhappiness and discomfort. I being such, it is not proper for me to cause the death of a man who himself wishes to live and who does not like to die, of a man who likes happiness and comfort and is averse to unhappiness and discomfort.

In this manner, the Buddha goes through the three acts of bodily violence like killing, stealing and sexual offenses and the four offenses of speech like lying, tale-telling, harsh words and frivolous speech. These are pin-pointed as patterns of antisocial behaviour which, on this basis of self-example, must not be resorted to by the instructed and educated Buddhist disciple. Thus we discover that *mettā bhāvanā* or development of loving kindness in Buddhist religious living is the development of one's attitude of friendliness or non-hostility to all living things around us.

This attitude of development of non-injury applies both to injury to oneself and injury to others besides oneself, i.e. *atta-vyābādhāya* and *para-vyābādhāya*. It comes in the Ambalaṭṭhikā Rāhulovāda Sutta [MN. I. 414 ff.] where the Buddha himself gives this advice to his own son, the young monk Rahula. The same sutta says that the net result of this Buddhist culture is that one never has within oneself a sense of hostility and antagonism towards others: *yo vyāpādo so pahīyissati*. Mind you, I say firmly, it is not a mere wish through the power or *ānubhāva* of the Buddha or a prayer for the sake of others. Check on what you are doing at the moment.

In this manner, correction of human behaviour in society is primarily based on this principle of self-example or *attūpanāyika*. Do not do unto others what you would not like others to do unto you. What an ennobling injunction which is more

than twenty five centuries old in the history of the world. What a lovely brotherhood of honest and sincere humans, of men, women and children that would make.



Thought for the Day 9

Contentment or *santuṭṭhī* in Buddhism is not Gluttonous Enjoyment

Our theme today is 'Being satisfied within one's limitations, limitations which one cannot justifiably break through.' One calls this mind-set contentment or *santuṭṭhī*. Please do safeguard against the local Sinhala mistranslation of this as 'rejoicing' [Sinhala *santosaya* or *satuṭuvīma*, a concept which licentiously knows no limit]. The Maṅgala Sutta includes it among its life-enriching virtues or attitudes, contributing to success: *sabbattha-m-aparājitā*. It means 'Endowed with such virtues as enumerated in the Maṅgala Sutta, one shall never fail in life' [*santuṭṭhī ca kataññutā ... etam maṅgalam uttamaṃ* Sn. v. 265].

Our Buddhist texts say that 'Even a downpour of gold coins from heaven will not quench the thirst of those who keep chasing after pleasures': *na kahāpanavassena titti kāmesu vijjati* [Dhp. v. 186]. While being still un-satiated in his thirst, death will overtake such a man: *atittam eva kāmesu antako kurute vasaṃ* [Dhp. v. 48]. It is this competitively accelerated insatiable thirst for *kāma* or pleasures of the world which drive both the rich and the poor as well as the high and the low in this country, or anywhere at that, go cringing to borrowed gods or divinities of their own creation, kneeling down before them for not very ennobling requests.

What is denounced here is both lustful greed and escalating ambition with an endless sense of acquisition or achievement. This mode of behaviour blatantly

reflects the disastrous overgrowth of greed and hatred, i.e. *lobha* and *dosa*, which Buddhism denounces all the time. Even where it could be a peaceful and contented life in the home for a man or woman, as husband or wife, unbridled quest for extras elsewhere, violating conjugal fidelity, as is becoming the norm today world over, is frowned upon in Buddhism as a despicable breach of social propriety.

The Parābhava Sutta of the Suttanipāta [Sn. v.108] vividly portrays this mode of censurable behaviour, saying that a man who is not satisfied with sex life in his own home [*sehi dārehi asantuṭṭho*], and seeks pleasure in the company of prostitutes or wives of others [*vesiyāsu padissati dissati paradāresu*] is a despicable fellow, heading for his downfall.

On the contrary, contentment in any and every area of life offers to people of culture and good breeding more joy than any summit of affluence could ever do [*santuṭṭhī paramaṃ dhanam*: DhP. v.206]. Thus *santuṭṭhī* is the joy one gets while living within the boundaries of propriety set for persons of different grades, as monks and lay persons, men and women, young and old. Note DhP. I.I. p.26. v.18 which insists on conjugal fidelity in no uncertain terms: *sakena dārena ca hohi tuṭṭho ti*. Remember its breach was censured and despised above in the Parābhava Sutta.

As we make these studies on the preparation of humans for ascendance on the path towards their liberation in Nirvana, we feel the need all the time to make Buddhist teachings like those in the Maṅgala sutta more and more a reality in our homes rather than sterilizing them as ritualistic chants via the cassette trade of the market place. We plead with you. Please come forward to achieve this end. The Sutta's own request is:

Having perfected these virtues listed herein
 one shall always be victorious everywhere.
 And shall always be in blissful comfort.

This shall be their greatest success. Translated by the author

*Etādisāni katvāna sabbattha m'aparājītā
sabbattha sotthiṃ gacchanti taṃ
tesaṃ maṅgalaṃ uttamaṃ.*

Maṅgala Sutta - Sn. v. 269



Thought for the Day 10

Towards a Brotherhood of Mankind Let All Religions Unite

A good day, dear listeners. By now we know that we humans are gregarious by our very nature. That we are fond of company. We have therefore to adopt and accept community life and live in a spirit of friendship. That is what is also conveyed by the Buddhist concept of *maitrī* or *mettā* to which we have already referred many a time. It is the spirit of friendliness between oneself and the rest of the world. It leads to the development of human goodness.

Humans are not to kill other humans for their own survival or for the furtherance of their ethnic superiority or for the expansion of their religious domains. No one with what one would call human dignity or any sense of decency could submit to or subscribe to such barbaric bestial behavior, in the name of religious beliefs or teachings. That was the rule in history only with the primitive man in his wandering days of the hunt. There could and should be no invasions with any religious or ethnic groups anywhere in the civilized world. Without such a concept of magnanimity being honestly and deeply ingrained in the human mind, any talk of a global village, whether via democracy or socialism, reduces itself to self-deceptive buffoonery. But that is what is happening around

us everywhere, at world level today.

In a country like Sri Lanka with a long history of peace and culture, better known to the world outside than to those within the roost here, or to the frogs in the well, to use a different idiom, these values have to be retrieved and re-established among the younger generation of the land. We are confident that these young people are full of promise. These values have to be an integral part of the education for the people of this country, specially to the younger. Some of them are sharp enough to see through the stupidity of wild election promises that are being flung across the land these days.

So we take up a few fundamental basic concepts related to this. We sponsor *metta* or *maitrī*, both of which mean loving kindness, friendliness and total elimination of enmity. It is not a mere word to be uttered in prayer. Do not convert it into a mere chant from the lips, wishing this and that to the others, standing where you are, without much change within your self. *Mettā* has to be a new attitude to life and in one's own life, that has to get into one's head and heart. The head will decide its logical validity and argue in favour of it. The heart will render it into a living reality as an emotional quality and make you feel so and live up to it.

Make this development of *maitrī* real by projecting this feeling into those immediately around you in the home - your family members, your wife or husband, your children and your own aged parents but for whom you would not be here today. Do not fail to include the domestic aids, if you have any. You are now with them. You have to be with them. Bring that warmth of true love to every one, without reservations and restrictions. This applies, well and truly, to one's love to the whole world - *mettañ ca sabba-lokasmiṃ mānasaṃ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ*. Sn. v. 150. This requires a great deal of training to develop. But love developed in this manner undoubtedly produces in society a better brand of men and women. No alienation of one from another. No psychopathic cases of men and women of all ages suffering from what is fashionably called depression.

It is they who develop *māitrī* in this manner who qualify to finally reach their goal in Nirvana. So says the Buddhist sutta dealing with *mettā*: *Na hi jātu gabbhaseyyaṃ punareti' ti*. See Metta Sutta of the Suttanipāta [Sn. vv. 143-152].

To this we would immediately add another inseparable virtue which should fetch a very high price in society. It is the quality of being respectful which is labeled in Buddhism as *gāraṇa*. The Maṅgala Sutta which offers us a list of thirty-eight items which contribute to success in one's life has *gāraṇa*, along with a few others of very similar value - *gāraṇa ca nivāto ca santuṭṭhī ca kataññutā* [op.cit.]. *Gāraṇa* is the respectful attitude towards others, particularly to those who are one's seniors. It is also the respectful recognition of the worth of others. Buddhists respectfully recognize even those below one's status, like domestic aids in the home, for the services they render for the benefit of others. That is why the Sigala Sutta [DN.III.191f.] includes the *dāsa-kammakarā* or servants under its admonition about *disā-namassana*.

With this network of so down-to-earth universal human values which Buddhism sponsors, let us endeavour to integrate, at least in Sri Lanka, the humans into a magnanimous and harmonious community, shutting out ethnic and religious hostilities, which are being disastrously exploited by petty power seekers world over.



Thought for the Day 11

A Firm Resolve for Self Improvement

In our day to day living, we must remember, there are many invading forces which contaminate and corrode our lives. It is a constant and ceaselessly continuing process. This is the outcome of our reaction to the stimuli with which the world outside keeps bombarding us. Its intensity and the extent of damage it

does depends on the religio-cultural tenor of the society in which we live. Every one of our sense organs like the eye, the ear *et cetera*, requires us to respond to the messages they bring in. In common parlance, we refer to this as gratification of our senses. Psychologists today in the western world, like the U.S.A. are becoming more and more sensitive to this and are not unwilling to use expressions, born out of their convictions, like 'Delay gratification'.

Buddhism takes very serious note of this process. We are attracted by pleasurable objects and the normal, downstream tendency is to get attracted to and attached to them. On the other hand, whatever we like less, we are repelled by them. This twin process of attraction and repulsion or *anurodha* and *virodha*, like the power-generating pistons in a motor vehicle, generates the momentum for the continuance of our painful process of *samsāric* existence.

This is how it happens in our life every day. This process which results from our own erratic judgement of the world which is generated through our cognitive awareness and goes under the name of *vitakka* and *papañca*, produces in turn the *upādāna* or grasping at things of the world. Thereby we are plunged into endless stress and strain of *samsāric* inheritance called *bhava* [*upādāna-paccayā bhavo*]. This is what leads us to generate within each one of us a world within a world, a psychic or mind-made world of *pañca-upādāna-kkhandha* as against the physically real world of *pañca-kkhandha*, i.e. our psycho-physical being.

We are warned about this *samsāra*-involving process of *upādāna* and are told that we could be torn off our moorings and be carried away like in a flood, and could ultimately get drowned and perish. Verse no. 25 of the Dhammapada describes this very vividly where it says *dīpaṃ kayirātha medhāvī yaṃ ogho nābhikīrati* = A wise man makes for himself an island from which he cannot be swept away.

It is important for everyone of us to be reminded of this regular, but

disastrous phenomenon. We got to live with it. It is part of life, nay the very process of living. Of judging and making decisions, sitting on the erratic side, referred to as *vitakketi* and *papañceti*. But we have to regulate and bring under control this process. The verse from the Dhammapada which we quoted above is one of the finest instructions given on this subject.

It begins by calling for alertness or *utthāna*, i.e. alertness both of body and mind. Like an athlete on the running track, waiting for the words 'on your mark, get set, go', one must be ready to be called into action with minimum delay. Readiness of both body and mind must be coupled together. This is one of the achievements of that vital process of *bhāvanā* which goes under the name of *kāya-bhāvanā* and *citta-bhāvanā*. This is true culture of body and mind.

The next virtue we are called upon to acquire is *appamāda*, i.e. the ability and the capacity to maximize time. It is not mere punctuality or arriving on time. People find it difficult today to find time for many of their activities. Within the same period of twenty-four hours available people have to attend to many more activities than they have been engaged in ever before. This is true of school children who have a great deal more of home work to do or tuition classes to go to or men who are called upon to or choose on their own to put in many more hours of work in their offices. It is not very different for women too. Those who cannot efficiently cope with this, find themselves falling into disastrous situations. So please remind yourselves once gain about this serious need to maximize time or exercise *appamāda* and doubly check whether you are keeping up to the mark.

In the psycho-ethical area of life you are also required to exercise restraint and discipline as you go through life. This is called *samyama* and *dama*. Neither the young nor the older can afford to make a success of their life without these. Learn to acquire them: restraint and discipline. They would make your life steadfast and secure.



Thought for the Day 12

Self-Composure and Calmness of manner

A man of good breeding and culture, any time anywhere, reflects a great deal of self-composure or calmness of manner. It is even more than that. He has established himself according to a well approved and well accepted way of discipline. In Buddhism, we refer to this quality of life as *atta-sammā-panīdhi*, i.e. establishing oneself well. We are indeed not far from the truth if we say that such a man of good breeding would contain within himself all the virtues or *maṅgalas*, thirty eight in number, which are listed in the little *sutta* by that name. We call this the Maṅgala Sutta, the sutta of success generators. It is indeed meant to be that. The Sutta envisages no defeat or disaster for the man or woman who lives up to its expectations. The verdict of the sutta as at Sn. v. 269 runs as follows: *Etādisāni katvāna sabbattha-m-aparājitā sabbattha sotthiṃ gacchanti*. But this is by no means through any magical or mysterious powers. But definitely through living its instructions: *etādisāni katvāna*. This sutta needs to reach not only the ear of the Buddhist via the cassette or the CD, but to reach, via his ear, the totality of his personality and ensure an impact on his living.

In Buddhist religious thinking, culture is what a human should be as man or woman, worthy of the brand name human. And as our Buddhist books say, it is because of the more developed state of mind or *manassa ussannatāya manussā* that the humans are placed far ahead of animals which act on reflexes. Man does think on his own and does make judgements relevant to every new situation he has to face. He never has to pray to another to be enabled to think. Or to be salvaged whenever he fails to think and sinks low and bungles. This is what is meant by well established stability in life or *atta sammā panīdhi* in terms of Buddhist thinking.

The bedrock of this is soundness of judgement. Where does this come from? Never from the State which has continually to be a product or source of good judgement but which it rarely turns out to be. This is why a book of great sanity like RELIGION, THE MISSING DIMENSION OF STATECRAFT [Ed. Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson] has come to be written. It is religion alone that can inculcate the necessary detachment for the acquisition of this honourable position of being able to judge. 'One has to be free from likes and dislikes. Be under no pressure or threats from anywhere, persons or institutions. Vested interests shout not cloud one's vision'. This applies equally well to the State and to the people there in who are believed to be taken care of by the State. Buddhism puts it as

Chandā dosā bhayā mohā yo dhammaṃ nātivattati.

DN III 182

Whosoever transgresses not the norms of good living through one's excessive desires or one's dislike of another, or under threats imposed, or through total lack of judgement...

Translated by the author

But for this to become a possibility and a reality anywhere in the world, there should never be the endeavour nor the possibility of the State buying up religion and run it the way they fancy it should be. Nor should religion ever attempt to bring the State under its total command, leading to the neglect of its secular needs. There needs to be all the time the dignified detachment between the two. There should never be the need for any stupid separation of these Siamese twins, the State and Religion. Any attempt at it would invariably end up calamitously in disaster, with bestial rivalries between the two.



Thought for the Day 13

Goodness of Man within the Dhamma Perimeter

*Na hi dhammo adhammo ca ubho samavipākino
adhammo nirayaṃ neti dhammo pāpeti suggatiṃ.*

Thag. v 304

Good and evil yield not the same results. Evil leads to degraded states. Good leads to states of elevation.

Translated by the author

Today we speak about differentiating between good and evil. The verse we quoted above defines good and evil in terms of the results or *vipāka* they produce. Evil or *adhamma* leads to the degradation of the human while *dhamma* or goodness upgrades his life. In terms of life in the world, basic goodness of man depends on his total adjustment to the world he lives in, with the minimum damage to or destruction of what is within it. Life in the world, even according to the latest findings of the top class scientists, has to be one of perfect adjustment to what is known as the ecosystems of the world. This is how the great scientists of the world express this idea.

"The one process now going on that will take millions of years to correct is the loss of genetic and species diversity by the destruction of natural habitats. This is the folly our descendants are least likely to forgive us."

Edward Wilson in Biophilia Hypothesis p. 4

Life of every living thing has to be respected. This includes all forms of life,

both human and non-human. Any injury to it, at any point, to serve the whims and fancies of man, quite often under the misleading cover of divine sanctions in religious teachings and practices, invariably leads to ecological imbalances. Thinking on these lines of non-violence is now the order of the day, world over. But today, governments everywhere are so stupefied and politicians turned so much to self-seeking that they can hardly get anywhere near to these lines of sensible thinking.

This is why the first precept of Buddhist *pañcasīla* emphatically begins with the respect for all forms of life. *Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī* is not the mere non-killing of a fowl for the table - for your lunch or your dinner. All over the world, respect for life is taking a new turn, reflecting a recognition of and respect for everything that lives on this planet. Such people not only shun and keep away from animal foods, e.g. fish, meat and eggs, but even do not utilise anything which in its preparation causes injury to animal life. Even pharmaceutical products which are tested on animals are totally rejected by certain groups of people.

In a country where teaching and learning of Buddhism has been completely veered in the direction of an academic exercise, whether in the schools or in the temples or in the Pirivenas, for the award and receipt of certificates or degrees, the content of Buddhism gets seriously abridged. And at the same time lamentably distorted. For instance, not to know that the current practice of observing the Poya day Uposatha or Aṭa Sil for a limited period of time from morning only till the evening of the same day, sponsored by a vast majority of Sri Lankan monks, both in this country and even abroad, is a complete perversion. It is an unpardonable heresy.

How few among Sinhala monks or laymen know about it or are honest and brave enough to tell others about it? Read the authentic teachings on this in the original Pali texts and discover the truth for yourself. [See it yourself in the Anguttara Nikaya Vol. IV. p. 251. PTS.] Or get it from somebody who can take you to the source and indicate to you the page and line of the text in which you

can find what you are looking for. This sort of source of information for the acquisition of a corrected vision of your religion or *sammā diṭṭhi* is referred to in the Buddhist texts as *parato ghoso* or acquiring it from another.

In a Buddhist country like Sri Lanka, we must be able to reflect a far greater degree of love towards all forms of life. Let us join the saner and more humanitarian world of today which truly exists outside Sri Lanka, by courageously cutting down our consumption of animal foods. The world-wide campaign in this direction is overwhelming. Any stubborn attempt to resist it is to express our greed to eat in support of our Epicurean philosophy of eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. But let us not die with an animal philosophy of the jungle of merely eating and drinking. At least a little more than that. Let us make an honest endeavour.

May all beings be well and happy. Let there be peace on earth and good will among men.



Thought for the Day 14

How we Pay for the Evil we do

*Na hi pāpaṃ kataṃ kammaṃ sajjū khīraṃ 'va muccati
ḍahantaṃ bālam anveti bhasmaccahanno'va pāvako.*

Dhp. v. 71

An evil deed done does not immediately bear fruit
like milk set to curdle. Like a spark of fire concealed
under a pile of ash, it keeps chasing the doer,
consuming him in its flames.

Translated by the author

Our theme today is penalties or payments for the evil we do. This is the Buddhist theory of *kamma* and *vipāka*. Remember, as we shall soon show you, *kamma* in Buddhism does not imply fatalistic determinism. Nor is it a theory of 'a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye.' Looking out for identical resemblance of the results to the deed previously done [like spasms of back-ache which the Buddha is said to have suffered in the last days of his life, or the blindness of eyes which came upon Thera Cakkhupala] is pointed out by the Buddha himself to be an erroneous and distorted vision of the Buddhist theory of *kamma*. If that were so, says the Buddha, living the higher religious life makes no sense [*evaṃ santam bhikkhave brahmacariya-vāso na hoti*] and there would be no opportunity for terminating *saṃsāric* suffering or *dukkha* [*okāso na paññāyati sammā dukkhassa anta-kiriyāya*. Both references at AN. I. 249].

In the same context, the Buddha corrects the fallacy when people say " In whatever manner a man does a deed, in the self same manner he shall suffer for it." - *Yathā yathā' yaṃ puriso kammaṃ karoti tathā tathā taṃ paṭisaṃvediyati*. The point of the Buddha's correction here is that the doer does not suffer for his *kamma* in a pattern identical to the commission of the deed, but that he suffers the fruition or *vipāka* thereof - *yathāvedaniyaṃ kammaṃ karoti tathā tathā' ssa vipākaṃ paṭisaṃvediyati*. The idea of a *kamma* and its identity with the *vipāka* or *kamma-sarikkhatā* is hereby ruled out.

Many monks and many more laymen write books and deliver sermons, supporting this erroneous view, obviously through ignorance of the dhamma. They rely on material derived from books like the Apadāna Pāli, which are works of much later origin, without realising that even the Commentator Buddhaghosa reports of this book, and that together with Buddhavamsa and Cariyā-Piṭaka, that it was rejected in Sri Lanka as being un-acceptable within the Sutta Piṭaka [DA. I. 15].

But the idea that a doer of bad *kamma* must purge himself of their toxic effect of self contamination is a basic idea of the Buddhist *kamma* theory. That no man shall gain his liberation, without paying off for or purging oneself of the ill effects of the consciously committed bad *kamma* is a fundamental principle of Buddhist teachings. Here is textual authority - *Na tvev' āham bhikkave sañcetanikānaṃ kammānaṃ katānaṃ upacitānaṃ appaṭisaṃviditvā dukkhass' antakiriyaṃ vadāmi.* AN.V.292

What then is bad *kamma*? Buddha himself defines *kamma*, stressing primarily its psychological basis. "I say the motive is *kamma*" says the Buddha - *cetanā ' haṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi.* If these motives for action have mind-defiling bases like greed or *lobha*, hatred or *dosa* and delusion or *moha*, then the resulting action is said to be classified as *akusala* or unskilled. Such action produce painful results or *dukkha-vipāka*. They tend to lead one to degraded states of existence. They deflect one from the goal of Nirvana.

This fruition process of *kamma* or of *kamma* bearing its fruit spreads extensively through time. *Kamma* may immediately bear fruit here and now and then it is labelled as *diṭṭha-dhamma-vedanīya*. It may see its fruition in the very next existence - *upapajja-vedanīya*. Or it may be at any time during one's *samsāric* continuance - *aparāpariya-vedanīya*.

Thus it becomes clear that *kamma* rooted in the evil bases of *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha* contribute to the prolongation of the painful life process in *samsāra*. And for that same reason, the Noble Eightfold Path which leads man out of it is called the *kamma-nirodha-gamanī-paṭipadā* [*Katamo ca bhikkhave kamma-nirodha-gāmanī-paṭipadā. Ayam eva ariyo atṭhaṅgiko maggo.* SN.IV. 133]

So it is important that we as Buddhists become adequately aware of what prompts us to a wide range of maddening activity in life and choose sensibly as to what we could safely do and what we could not do, without disastrous consequences to ourselves.



Thought for the Day 15

In Harmony with One Another Man and Nature

A good day, dear listeners. Let me talk to you today about the need to build up, for our own benefit, a healthy consolidated community out of ourselves. The need for this is felt today more than ever before, particularly in Sri Lanka. Today's city life is locking us up in our own homes, shutting out others from us. If one is careful enough to analyze this situation closely, one would realize that this is damaging both to ourselves and to those around us. It is our well-grounded belief that all of us must mingle more freely with one another for our own benefit. We are shut out not only from people, but also from nature, which I say with firm conviction, is the very cradle of our existence.

Your simple answer to this self-generated devastating situation is that times have changed. That it is different now from life in the country home of the good old days. True enough. But who has lost in the deal. It is you and I. All of us, including our born and unborn children. We have no contact with the world we live in. We do not know, in the first place, human relations. Even children have very little chance to now their parents adequately and dearly. Let alone grand parents.

In various parts of the world, including Sri Lanka, babies have to comfort themselves, drinking their own mother's milk out of bottles taken off the refrigerator, while their mothers are totally engaged in all manner of activities at their places of work. Children today have no concept of what it means to grow up in life. Or what it means to love or be loved.

Think very seriously of this situation. I have dozens of people coming to me,

both men and women, in various age groups ranging from fifteen to forty-five, even up to sixty, whom I discover to my bitter disappointment, are almost starving to death for want of love. Victims of jealousy, suspicion, distrust and dislike, amounting almost to enmity. Not being adequately cared for and loved. Merely being taken for granted as parts of a family. No more than dysfunctional parts of an engine. Never integrated to one another in their correct loving relationships. They are, more often than not, grown up children of affluent families. In a permissive society like ours of today, where divorce and separation or even multi-compartmental life of parents is so common place, like chewing gum in the mouth, who ever is mindful about the lamentable and pitiable plight of the children? We are, sad to say, in utter confusion of values, not adequately understanding our priorities.

Let us turn to another area now. Children, much worse their parents, I know, do not know their own environment in which they live. To children in Colombo, and this I have discovered through my own encounters and interviews, Sri Lankan birds are complete strangers to native Sri Lankans. How could they know those delightful migratory birds like the Golden Oriole [*Kaha Kurulla*], the Orange Minivet [*Sivuru Horā*] and the Paradise Flycatcher [*Redi Horā*] who, like graceful singing stars on the stage, come here during the northern Winter, display to us for a short while their beauty of form and song and get back home like honoured guests.

What are the Mums and Dads in the home doing, who do not introduce these refreshing and stimulating side scenes to their children? Caught up in a dreadfully competitive rat race for social pre-eminence, parents are much more concerned with taking their children to public swimming pools, several times a week than taking them out to the country side for bird watching or collecting wild berries and flowers.

In the year 1949, and that's quite a long time ago while I was a young student in England, our Vice Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, Canon

Raven, an English churchman of more than fifty years then, would be seen on a Sunday, riding in his old bicycle to the country side, absorbed in his bird watching, in search of a single nightingale, singing in the bush. And as a rich product of his experience, he wrote his book *In Praise of Birds* by Canon Raven.

I recollect with great pleasure, even today, what I saw, what I heard and what I smelt in my younger days in the country side. Delightfully pretty humming birds or *Mal Sūṭikkas* in their fascinating colours in the woods, melodiously singing birds and the weirdly screeching crickets in the bush, delicious sweet and sour berries picked off the branches, and at times even pungently aromatic wild flowers. We were with nature and nature was with us all the time.

Here, I assure you, man never seriously interfered with nature. He had not yet been taught to kill, not for anybody's sake. We learnt in our country setting, in a Buddhist Sri Lanka, to love everything, even the mongoose and the cobra, as they fought each other in deadly battle, And in turn, we learnt to be loved wherever we went.



A Thought for the Day

Instalment Two

Preface

Religion and culture has been with me a subject of life-long interest. Inheriting a belief that my life here and now has possibly a past of its own and that I can claim to possess a personality which is considerably more than what my parents would have given me, I start with the conviction that it is I alone who

has to pilot the inner and outer growth of my life in a direction which may reasonably be called progress or development.

With such a background in our cultural ethos, we feel that religion must necessarily give to each man, in this very life, a multi-dimensional richness. How rich we become in this process has to be judged essentially on the basis of our contribution to the totality of cosmic harmony. We do not use the word cosmic here either in the sense of divine or other worldly. Religion, specially mine own, gives me a feeling of pleasantly blended inter-relatedness in the life we live on this earth, let alone the cosmic vastness around us. Every step we wish to take forward, for growth, development and advancement in our own life has to be such that it does not interfere with or stand in the way of peace and harmony of every other segment of life, whether it be human, animal or plant.

Scientific sensitivity in this direction we witness today because of the tremendous advances all areas of science are making, has to give the Buddhists who know the depth of their religion immense joy. If only they had learnt the true dimensions Buddhist thinking, and endeavored to live at least up to a part of it, they would invariably have been the world's first recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize.

If this truly is the Buddhist concept of religion, then we can make a big deal with it for culture. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines culture as: the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement.' Let us as Buddhists add here that **intellectual** must be coupled with **spiritual** and **religious**. Best works of art in the world, east or west, it must not be forgotten, have had their origin, where intellect, harmlessly and benevolently proceeded further with spiritual stimulation. Think of the Dharmacakra-pravartana statue of Saranath or the Parinirvāṇa one of Kushinagar, or Michael Angelo's Ascension of Christ in St.Peter's Chapel in the Vatican or Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper. But what of the intellectual achievement in the preparation of the bomb for Hiroshima.

Among its many other comments, the Dictionary also adds 'improvement by mental or physical training.' Using the title Religion and Culture in the preparation of this publication, I pay great attention to the first part of this comment, namely 'improvement by mental training.' Under this section, we present one of the finest cultural components Buddhism has gifted to the world, namely **meditation**. Having had its genesis more than two and a half millennia ago in the cradle of Buddhism and registered under the name of *jhāna* in Pali [Sanskrit *dhyāna*] this religious practice of intense contemplative visualization has journeyed from India to Japan via China in the competent hands of the Indian Master Bodhidharma. In China, the school which espoused it came to be called Ch'an. In Japan, this new meditation school of Buddhism reached its peak of development in the birth of the Zen sect. What we have said so far should clearly indicate how religion and culture invariably go hand in hand.



Thought for the Day 1

Forbearance and Patience

Even while possessing physical power, whosoever forbears towards a weaker person, that is called the highest expression of patience. A weakling has necessarily to hold back all the time.

Our theme today is forbearance and patience. In Pali we express this idea with the words *khanti* and *kamā*. This is the restraint of **impulsive reaction** in the **face of provocation**. When others address us with words which are not pleasant and polite or make remarks at us which are critical and harsh, it hurts us because it does violence to the personal image we have created of ourselves.

When we are angered and possibly driven into a rage because of **harsh and bad words of others**, we should remind ourselves of two things. Mark my words

here about the area about which I am now speaking. It is still at **the level of speech or words**. Not of provocative physical action, like a blow dealt on you. First, we must remember that we cannot appoint ourselves the **law enforcement authority** over **the improprieties of others**. We can do no more than give a gentle hint to the other about the apparent error or offer a mild reminder. Acceptance or rejection of it is entirely with the other party. We cannot insist on **legal authority for ourselves for prosecution and punishment**.

This provocative region in the use of speech is the area the correction of which Buddhism takes over with its carefully spelt out principles regarding propriety of speech. As Buddhists, we are apparently concerned, if at all, only with the fourth precept of lying or *musāvādā veramaṇī* of the *pañcasīla*. Remember, Buddhism has a great deal more than that. Think, for instance of slander or tale-telling which goes under the name of *pisunā vācā*. or *kelām* in Sinhala. Offenses through faulty speech in Buddhism are fourfold - *vācā-kammaṃ catubbidham*. There are regulatory precepts for the prevention of each - such as *musāvādā veramaṇī*, *pisunā-vācā veramaṇī*, *pharusā-vācā veramaṇī* and *sampappalāpā veramaṇī*.

In the well known Sutta called the Parable of the Saw or Kakacūpama of the Majjhima Nikāya [MN. I. 122-129. Sutta No. 22], the Buddha details out five different ways

in which **people can properly engage themselves in conversation**. People must pay attention not only to the truth or falsehood of what they say, but also to many other considerations like propriety of time, one's intention or motivation behind an act of conversation, etc. These will naturally reduce the provocative situations in which people at the receiving end of improper speech will lose their patience and resort to unguarded impulsive reactions. Buddhist counseling attempts to reduce the viciousness of such situations with a two-pronged approach. First, by reducing the amount of such unguarded speech in society. Second, by regulating the reactions of people to such situations.

These instructions will equally well apply to provocative situations resulting from impropriety of bodily action like killing, stealing and sexual misbehaviour. From the angle of the doer, these are guarded against under the *sīlas*, particularly the *pañca-sīla*. From the angle of the persons at the receiving end, they are advised, in terms of the dhamma, not to develop bitterness and wrath over such deeds done. The evil resulting from generating such reactions is said to be unsuspectingly massive. They build up ceaseless chains of reactions, contributing to the misery of *saṃsāric* continuance. With patience and forbearance, we must always resist reacting impulsively to provocative situations.

Brooding over injuries done to one by others, through word or deed, builds up unsuspected masses of wrath and enmity which directly flow to the production of misery for us all the time. This is the vibrant theme of the following verse from the Dhammapada.

He abused me, he assaulted me, he defeated me,
he took away my possessions. Whoever keeps brooding
in this manner, their anger never ceases.

Dhp. v.



Thought for the day 2005 No. 2

Self-Standard Religious Thinking

For a Buddhist we would consider self-assessment or self-scrutiny to be a vital ingredient in life. One does measure oneself in relation to others, with regard to their being good or bad in terms of Buddhist standards. This measurement for self-correction is referred to as *attanā 'va attānaṃ anuminitabbaṃ*, i.e. one must measure oneself by oneself [Anumāna Sutta at MN. I. 97].

This is how one does it. He determines for himself that ` This person is evil in character and is given to evil ways of living. He is invariably disagreeable and

unpleasant to me.' Then he says to himself: ' If I would become like that, then I too would be disagreeable to others.' Realising this, he would refrain from being so. This **self-standard religious thinking** in Buddhism is spoken of as the ***attūpanāyika dhamma-pariyāya*** [SN. V. 353] and is used in all areas of ethical correction as in *attānam upamaṃ katvā na haneyya na ghātaye*. This means ' Putting oneself in the self same position of the other, one should not kill, nor cause others to kill.'

One must note here the very vital philosophical import of **the concept of self** in Buddhism. Side by side with the unambiguous rejection, with its theory of ***anatta***, of an eternal unchanging religio-metaphysical self called a soul or ***ātman***, ultimately related to a creator God or a primary source of cosmic power called Brahman, Buddhism unhesitatingly **admits the reality of the existence of conditionally generated *samsāric* beings**, with their own identity and their personal responsibility for what they do [*yathā kammūpage satte*].

In Buddhism, both ***dukkha*** or suffering in *samsāric* continuance and ***sukha*** or ***nibbānic bliss*** in being liberated therefrom are personal and individual. These are achievements brought about by humans themselves, by each one for himself or herself, without any assistance sought from elsewhere. They are themselves responsible for them.

*Attanā 'va kataṃ pāpaṃ attanā saṅkilissati
 attanā akataṃ pāpaṃ attanā 'va visujjhati
 suddhī asuddhī paccattaṃ
 nāñño m'aññaṃ visodhaye*

Dhp. v. 165



Thought for the Day 03

Independence, Inter-dependence and Social growth

Dear listeners. Growth in terms of society and growth in terms of transcendental values are both equally valid considerations in Buddhist thinking. The Pali word *vuddhi* as a noun and *vaḍḍhati* and *abhivaḍḍhati* as verbs give a very rich meaning of growth, of coming to maturity and bearing fruit. This concept is most vividly seen in the world of plants.

All of us humans need to comprehend, understand and appreciate this in terms of our selves. But on the other hand, in this age of science and high technology where even unmanned space-ships make successful trips to outer space, people at down to earth level seem to make gross errors of judgement about independence and inter-dependence.

Buddhism takes serious note of this and dwells at length on this subject both in terms of the family as the smaller unit and the society as the larger one. The entire membership of the human community has to be seriously concerned about the reciprocity of these relationships as parents and children, teachers and pupils, employers and employees as well as rulers and the ruled. A serious and sensible study of the Buddhist Sigāla Sutta would serve everybody well on this subject, In a religion like Buddhism where humans are not unduly subordinated to an unknown power or powers outside, the cordial and harmonious relationship of humans to humans, over and above sex and age differences is convincingly emphasized.

These relationships are also at the same time multiple and mutually interactive. It must be seriously noted by parents in the home that while their children have to be lovingly integrated to themselves, primarily in the parent child relationship, the spirit must also be fostered that brothers and sisters of all ages must develop a high degree of co-lateral love. We lamentably discover from time to time, that due to total ignorance and gross misdirection, parents contribute very much to the breakdown of this co-lateral harmony. Due to this serious

mishandling, sons and daughters in the home become seriously jealous of one another, at a tragic young age of even less than fifteen years. Also due to this misdirected partisan loyalties and psychopathic love of parents, children at home become bitter enemies, hating one another. They even become criminally aggressive. Numerous such instances of both sexes, male and female, are brought to us with fair regularity. We have seen them become even mentally deranged, at twenties and thirties, to be reduced to depressed maniacs or hyper active violent criminals.

What we feel most urgently here is the need for parents to sensitize their children to being members of a loving family group, where there is a healthy abundance of give and take. This is possible only where parents can reasonably well direct their love to all family members alike, without harsh discrimination on mistaken grounds of academic achievements, performance in music and sports etc. Parents must use their wisdom, wherever they have it, to blend together these diverse accomplishments to weld together cooperative family success. In Sri Lankan Buddhist thinking, we do not need, neither in the family or in the electorate, the old colonial dictum of divide and rule. The price you would be called upon to pay for it is far too high. It could possibly be, for either party or both, psychotherapy clinics or police remands.



Thought for the Day No. 4

Thine own Path to Success in Life - Maṅgalaṃ

Dear listeners. In my last talk to you I did suggest that we, as parents and elders in the family, communicate to our growing up children some of the rich values which come down to us via the religion we profess. In our young days, more than seventy eighty years ago, we did immensely benefit from such cultural transmissions. It came from the mouths of people who knew what they were

talking about. They were humans of both sexes, the men and the women, like good wine matured in vat.

I personally had a whole host of such *māmās* and *nandās, bāppās* and *kuḍammās* - Gimara, Leonora, Gregoris, Methias and others in the village. I apologise that these names of more than eighty years ago do not sound typically Sinhalese. But they all, both men and women, carried with them the wisdom of the ages. Compared and contrasted with this, what our children get today from the media is of lamentably low quality, comparable to the *Kottu-roṭi* one buys in the market place, a chop up of every unwanted thing.

The Maṅgala Sutta we talked about last time has among its thirty eight items of *maṅgalāni* some really brilliant ones which can be cut and polished like gems of Ratnapura which will adorn you in any position in life, whether man or woman. I will pick up today only a few of them. It should be your home work to collect them, sort them out and set them up in their correct place for the edification of the members of your family.

Verse no. 4 of the Maṅgala Sutta which begins with *bāhusaccañ ca* has a set of four invaluable virtues which every sensible parent should endeavour to have inculcated in the lives of their children. They correctly belong to the area of education, but not necessarily of children. Even adults would do well to acquire them and reap the benefits thereof in their own lives.

Bāhusacca among them denotes much learning or acquisition of knowledge, implying both keenness of the student and the intensity of his application. It highlights **readiness to learn** which is now reckoned by Western educationists as one of the three **R's** of education. The older concept of Reading, (W) Riting and (A) Rithmatic is now being very much outdated. This **readiness to learn** is offered in Buddhist texts as *sussūsā* or the willingness to listen to. It is this, they say, which begets wisdom: *sussūsā labhate paññam*.

Coupled with this theoretical or intellectual learning of *bāhusacca*, we have

sippa which stands for **creative skills with one's hands** [*hattha-kosalla*]. This brings about personal accomplishments, giving each person an edge over the other. This adds to the collective usefulness of persons in society, each individual being able to contribute something to the total well-being of the community to which he belongs.

Immediately tagged on to this concept of acquired skills is the culture of personal discipline brought under the two items of **vinayo ca susikkhito** and **subhāsītā ca yā vācā**. The first covers perfectly well regulated personal discipline of individuals, of the way they behave, of boys and girls of school going age, international or otherwise, of men and women of all ages, employed or house-keeping. They all need a regulated pattern of disciplined behaviour which is covered under **vinayo ca susikkhito**. They also need restraint in their speech, in what they say and how they say, i.e. well uttered words, covered under the concept of **subhāsītā ca yā vācā**. We need very badly today to restore restraint and discipline into our midst. We suffer today a shameless nakedness in their absence. We are well below the level of animals. Elders, you please show the way in your behaviour in public and private.



Thought for the Day 05

On thine own Path to Success in Life - Maṅgalaṃ 1

Greetings to our listeners. Listen to me. I quote. "Having perfected these items of good behaviour in this manner, you shall always succeed in life. You shall never fail." Unquote. The Buddha, your Master and mine, said so unmistakably in the Mangala Sutta when he said **Etādisāni katvāna sabbattha m'aparājītā sabbattha sotthiṃ gacchanti taṃ tesam maṅgalaṃ uttamam**.

I ask you. Now tell me the truth. Isn't this a fact that the lady of the house is

probably regular in playing the Pirit casset every morning in the home while she is making the breakfast. There is no denying that there is a great deal of faith and piety in doing so. She is keen on having the household blessed thereby. OK. She has been repeatedly advised, we know, to do so.

What is the blessing she expects? The Buddha is not going to issue her, or any one of you at that, a certificate to say that the walls of the house have been disinfected and cleared of disease germs. Or that the profits in your or your husband's business concern are going to increase because of that chanting. Nor are you going to have good will agents coming to you, bringing prosperity to your home.

If a Pirit casset is played in the home, with all due propriety, at the right time and with the right atmosphere of peace and quiet, why don't the householders, the mother and the father and the children, find the time to sit and listen to it, with an intent to understand its message of meaningful instructions? Why don't we do it during the first half hour before dinner, if not daily, at least once or twice a week. How delightful it should turn out to be? You and your family are by now old enough to have learnt its meaning, if you ever cared for it.

The mother or the father, if they are responsible enough to be parents, should also be responsible for transmitting this message of culture down the family line. Pirit cassetts cannot be expected, I warn you, to play the role of modern gadgets like automatic gears or air bags in modern motor cars. Or like stand by lights during power cuts these days. Casset makers no doubt keep reaping bumper harvests, while you keep believing in promised rewards.

The Maṅgala Sutta is one of your regularly chanted *parittas*. I boldly hold the belief that the efficacy of *parittas* is more in your living upto the expectations of the injunctions they indicate rather than in your petrified or even your casually passing dreamy listening to their chanting or incantation.

The Maṅgala Sutta highlights thirty-eight items of good domestic living

patterns and requires you and your children to live up to these. The family has to be definitely cooperative in building up such an hierarchy of values. That is why the sutta winds up saying *etādisāni katvāna* which means **having perfected** or **having lived up to** these items of good behaviour.

If you go to a cafe or a restaurant in the city at a meal time, would you just sit at a table and keep grinning and smiling at the menu card? No. Not indeed. You would select the items you like in the menu, order them and on delivery, taste them, eat them and relish them. Let us, in our own way handle the *parittas* for this same purpose. It is for building up your strength, your moral and inner spiritual strength which will serve you both here and now, in terms of this life as well as in a life beyond of which we also know that it does really exist. Do not have even the slightest doubt about it. It totally destroys your being a Buddhist.



Thought for the Day 06

On thine own Path to Success in Life - Maṅgalaṃ 2

Dear listeners. Call Buddhism a religion, a philosophy or whatever you like. Please do note that Buddhism has a very rich philosophy of life, without having to lean on any divinity on this side or that. It is a philosophy which serves mankind, anywhere and everywhere. It does not stand to serve the will of any God, either in his good or in his bad moods. *Vindicta mihi* or **revenge is mine** is not in our Buddhist books.

We start today with a few ideas from the Maṅgala Sutta to which we referred on the last occasion. With or without school-going children in the home, most of us are familiar with the concept of **peer pressure**. It refers generally to persons of the same age group, influencing the others, invariably in a direction which is not very wholesome. This, however, is said mostly of children at school level. The

Maṅgala Sutta of old anticipates this, in a somewhat more comprehensive context, when it declares as its first key item to personal success or *maṅgalaṃ*, the selection of desirable associates and keeping away from the contaminating bad ones. It runs as ***Asevanā ca bālānaṃ paṇḍitānañ ca sevanā***.

This does not imply anything like class or creed discrimination. Far from it. But it does, on the other hand, recognize the possibility of humans, whether they be men, women or children, no matter of what age, by their own vicious and wicked nature, contaminating and poisoning the minds others and leading them in their downgrade descent. The Buddhist admonition is to avoid the company of such evil-minded persons for fear of oneself being contaminated through association: ***Upalepa-bhayā dhīro neva pāpa-sakhā siyā***.

For effective application of this injunction, each one of us must ourselves possess acceptable norms or standards of judgement. This is where one has to use with discrimination one's religious or socially accepted and recognized values. Parents have to guide their children in the homes on those lines. The schools have to augment and supplement them. The religion must finally sit in judgement on them. It has to be a closely integrated system of value inculcation. It is these values of good and bad which have to be adhered to in deciding as to whom one should associate and whom one should keep away from. There is nothing anti-social in the concept of ***asevanā ca bālānaṃ***. It is no more and no less than keeping away from infective disease germs.

Let us now take the next success-generator concept of ***paṇḍitānañ ca sevanā***. It implies the acquisition or seeking the company of beneficent resource personnel. Persons, being in whose company one acquires wisdom and judgement and good ways of life. Persons who set the model for good human behaviour. ***Paṇḍita*** does not necessarily connote people with massive book learning or mere academic proficiency. Much learning, without incorporating it in one's life, is generally frowned upon in Buddhism. The simile of the cowherd who only counts the heads of cattle every evening before handing them over to the

owner, without owning even a single one - *gopo' va gāvo ganayaṃ paresaṃ* at verse no. 19 of the Dhammapada is really very pungent on this. Why don't we communicate some of these brilliant sayings which come in our Dhamma to our children and our children's children?

You parents, young or old, both mother and father, who come with the easy excuse that you have hardly any time, with so much office work to make a living, to spare for your children, you shall never have in your life time a moment to rest your head in peace. I warn you. I have seen this happen, day after day. With saner government of the country, we shall soon need courts of law to prosecute parents for promoting, like the growth of wild weeds, juvenile delinquency in the land. Gentlemen of the jury. Please take note of this.



Thought for the Day 07

On thine own Path to Success in Life - Maṅgalaṃ 3

Dear listeners. In my last talk to you I did suggest that we, as parents and elders in the family, communicate to our growing up children some of the rich values which come down to us via the religion we profess. In our young days, more than seventy eighty years ago, we did immensely benefit from such cultural transmissions. It came from the mouths of people who knew what they were talking about. They were humans of both sexes, the men and the women, like good wine matured in vat.

I personally had a whole host of such *māmās* and *nandās, bāppās* and *kuḍammās* - Gimara, Leonora, Gregoris, Methias and others in the village. They all carried with them the wisdom of the ages. Compared and contrasted with this, what our children get today from the media is of lamentably low quality, comparable to the *Kottu-roṭi* one buys in the market place, a chop up of every

unwanted thing.

The Maṅgala Sutta we talked about last time has among its thirty eight items of *maṅgalāni* some really brilliant ones which can be cut and polished like gems of Ratnapura which will adorn you in any position in life, whether man or woman. I will pick up today only a few of them. It should be your home work to collect them, sort them out and set them up in their correct place for the edification of the members of your family.

Verse no. 4 of the Maṅgala Sutta which begins with *bāhusaccañ ca* has a set of four invaluable virtues which every sensible parent should endeavour to have inculcated in the lives of their children. They correctly belong to the area of education, but not necessarily of children. Even adults would do well to acquire them and reap the benefits thereof in their own lives.

Bāhusacca among them denotes much learning or acquisition of knowledge, implying both keenness of the student and the intensity of his application. It highlights **readiness to learn** which is now reckoned by Western educationists as one of the three **R**'s of education. The older concept of Reading, (W) Riting and (A) Rithmatic is now being very much outdated. This **readiness to learn** is offered in Buddhist texts as *sussūsā* or the willingness to listen to. It is this, they say, which begets wisdom: *sussūsā labhate paññam*.

Coupled with this theoretical or intellectual learning of *bāhusacca*, we have *sippa* which stands for **creative skills with one's hands** [*hattha-kosalla*]. This brings about personal accomplishments, giving each person an edge over the other. This adds to the collective usefulness of persons in society, each individual being able to contribute something to the total well-being of the community to which he belongs.

Immediately tagged on to this concept of acquired skills is the culture of personal discipline brought under the two items of *vinayo ca susikkhito* and *subhāsītā ca yā vācā*. The first covers perfectly well regulated personal discipline

of individuals, of the way they behave, of boys and girls of school going age, international or otherwise, of men and women of all ages, employed or house-keeping. They all need a regulated pattern of disciplined behaviour which is covered under *vinayo ca susikkhito*. They also need restraint in their speech, in what they say and how they say, i.e. well uttered words, covered under the concept of *subhāsītā ca yā vācā*. We need very badly today to restore restraint and discipline into our midst. We suffer today a shameless nakedness in their absence. We are well below the level of animals. Elders, you please show the way in your behaviour in public and private.



Thought for the Day 08

Thoughts for the Day - Poson Full Moon 2002

Professor Dhammavihari Thera

Greetings to our listeners on this full moon day of the month of Poson. In the Sri Lankan Buddhist calendar there could be no other more auspicious or more blissful day than this. It was on a full moon day of June like today, more than two thousand three hundred years ago, that Thera Mahinda arrived here from India bringing us the gift of Buddhism from his father, the great Emperor Asoka. It was our great good fortune that the then ruler of Sri Lanka during the second half of the 3rd century B.C., King Devanampiya Tissa, had already developed a friendship and together with it a political alliance with the Indian Buddhist Emperor Asoka.

The role of this Emperor Asoka in world history is all too well known to be repeated here before Sri Lankans. The first real impact Buddhism had on the world outside India was due to the dispatch of missionaries by Asoka. It was the zealous activities of these missionaries which made countries like Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq completely Buddhist well before the appearance of today's other

major religions of the world. The world renowned colossal Buddha statues of Bamiyan in Afghanistan, physically present in the world until recently, whose memories alone we cherish today, are indeed adequate evidence in history of the flourishing state of Buddhism in those middle eastern countries and the contribution Buddhism has made to the cultural enrichment of the people of those lands.

We in Sri Lanka should note with a sense of pride that we too benefitted equally well from the Asokan missions and that even today we are able to dearly hold a quantum of Buddhism which we can fruitfully present to the rest of the world. And this, I wish to say very emphatically, should be both by precept and by example.

At the time of the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka there was obviously a degree of elitism in the land, even as it is today. Let us not forget this. The king was, no doubt, with the people. Thera Mahinda arrived here on a day when Anurādhapura was celebrating its Festival of Nakkhatta Keli. The king had ordered the people to enjoy themselves in water sport in the Tisā Wewa, while he was going out with his own select group on his royal sport of deer hunt. We are not surprised at this. Royalty anywhere and everywhere must have something more than what the commoners do, whether it is tiger hunt of India or fox hunt of elsewhere. Let our children know the history and reality of these.

But Buddhism brought with it a new yardstick with which to measure well and truly the worth of these frills and trimmings of the then existing elitist social set ups. Remember Buddhism had to exist in a land, giving everyone, man and animal, a right of its own to live without danger to its safe continuance. The king himself, falling into the hands of Thera Mahinda in his act of deer hunting, soon realised the folly of this hunting for sport. As in India under Emperor Asoka, here too, within a relatively short period of time, about two hundred years, the kings of Sri Lanka, with the sanity and sobriety they acquired through Buddhism, began to impose a ban on the killing of animals in the island [*mā ghātaṃ kārayi dīpe*

sabbesam eva pāṇinaṃ].

As a result of the introduction of Buddhism to the island, we also reached an enviable highwater mark level of culture in the respect in which women came to be held. On the second day after Thera Mahinda's arrival in the island, Princess Anulā who was King Devānampiya Tissa's sister-in-law, turned up with five hundred ladies to listen to the teaching by the Thera. She is said to have had the ability and the wisdom to comprehend the depth of the Buddhist teachings. Far greater than that was her depth of conviction with regard to the vitality of this new teaching. With no further delay, she opted, together with the five hundred other court ladies, to renounce their household life and take to a monastic life in their serious pursuit of the Nibbanic goal. Our unstinted salutations, our *namaskār*, I would say, to these great ladies who gave such a powerful change of direction to the culture of this land.

They courageously joined the band of young nuns [*daharā bhikkhuniyo*] who came here from India with Therī Sanghamittā for the ordination of Anulā and her friends. As nuns they learned the Tripiṭaka from them and were soon able to preach it not only in Anurādhapura but also to carry it to the Rohana as well. Let us today attempt to relive the spirit in which our sisters of old endeavoured to serve the Sāsana of the Buddha in a true spirit of selflessness.



Instalment Three

New Year Greetings 2008 SLBC

Professor Dhammavihari Thera

As a new calendar year dawns today, we wish to take this opportunity to wish all of you, our dear listeners, happiness and prosperity and security of life in the year 2008 into which we are hopefully stepping in right now. As humans living on this planet, and with no other corrosive labels like our local political blues and greens fixed upon ourselves, or any other senseless brand names as being of the east or the west, north or south, or more disastrously militant identities of ethnicity and religion or even more stupefying political brand names of democracy or any other.

With the vastness of the sky above us, calling it heaven where a father grander than our own one at home on earth lives, what attitudinal changes do we bring upon our lives? Or with an equally magnanimous idea of *Tien* or Heaven as in *Tien hsia kuo chia* of the Chinese which means 'all below the heaven above are one family' why are we humans not large-hearted enough to look upon humanity as a collective whole? As products of a benign Creator can we be so insulting towards our Creator by dividing ourselves under clan names and brand names as though our Father in Heaven was polygamous and we children fight each other like Kilkenny cats till we eliminate each other from our midst?

Even in terms of the Christian era which we use today have we not now lived long enough on earth for over two thousand years. Have we so soon forgotten the sound advice we had on the lap of our grand parents to learn from experience. It is possible that we are over-educated today on the modern concepts of 'living in the present.' Have the humans become any better from the experience they have had from the past. How many of us have any links with the past? How many of us have any grand parents with whom we can talk with any comforting sense of intimacy?

As you sit together and relax on this New Year day in a festive mood, I would want those of you above sixty to sit back with me and think whether there is anything in your distant past which you can harvest today and deliver with delight to your children and grand children? Memories of your delightful childhood days

with plenty of dear and near relatives who in their bountiful and generous ways taught us the lessons of love, share and care. If in your childhood you have had a reasonably wholesome family life, with a reasonably good atmosphere of give and take among everybody, members of your own family and those in the neighbourhood, then please retrieve it and share it with everybody else in the community. Take it from me that these should not be mere speculations of a fictitious character.

The world today is going through a disastrous breakdown of values among the humans. Social ethics and religious ethics are both calamitously breaking down, both at the top and at the bottom. Those at the top are by no means a good example for those below. In some cases, it is also known to be that there is hardly any difference in the behaviour of the clergy and the laity. This is a serious malady, springing up every where at global level.

My New Year message to you today can be summed up as indicating the crying need in the world at this very moment to retrieve what is sensibly known everywhere as Moral Goodness. It is the recognition of accepted standards of human behaviour. These are very much down to earth. They are not written down on today's white boards in heaven. They spring up in the human community, practised by humans on earth for the good of mankind as a whole. In the area of world religions, there cannot be tribal ethics of massacring unbelievers or infidels. The world has witnessed far too many horrendous crimes of this sort. Such crimes are shamelessly raising their ugly head even today in the more civilized parts of the world. Lamentably with heaven's approval.

If we are to offer a universally acceptable package for this purpose from the Buddhist world, with its religio-cultural heritage which goes back to two and a half millennia, it is none other than the New Year hamper of Buddhist *pañca-sīla*. Today's world of sanity knows about it and from around the world people are putting into it items of unmistakable identity and acceptability. See it for your self and rejoice. Eloquenty presented theme of Save Animals and Animal Liberation

of Professor Peter Singer of Australia, currently Bio-Ethics of Princeton, directly and indirectly supports the very first precept of the *pañca-sīla*, i.e. *pāṇātipātā veramaṇī* or respect for all life. The concepts of Neighbourhood / Home Watch Area of Australia, England and USA are vehement in their support of the spirit of prevention of theft which is the sole aim of the second precept of *adinnādānā veramaṇī*. Police-enforced Breathalyser tests all over the world seem to look after, at least to a considerable extent, of the enforcement of the fifth precept of *surāmeraya- majjapamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī*.

With all sincerity I say to every one of you ` May the New Year which dawns today bring about in the minds of our human community an awareness of the need to establish and maintain Moral Goodness in the down to earth world of humans. Heaven above will never give sanction to the villainous behaviour of power seeking humans on earth. May there be peace on earth and goodwill among men.

